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MANUSCRIPTS

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NEWSPAPERS

Dubuque Express and Herald. Article, October 19, 1858.

THE ESTES HOUSE

by R. J. Bickel

Keokuk, Iowa

This article was sent into the ANNALS office by Mr. James Bentley of Davenport, Iowa. Mr. Bentley has had a historical interest in the Keokuk area and in the Estes House for some time. The article itself was researched and written by Mr. R. J. Bickel of Keokuk who was a member of the Lee County Historical Society and who is now deceased.

Keokuk was in the midst of a spectacular boom in 1856 and during that period attracted dozens of wealthy easterners and southerners who saw in the rapidly expanding city the future metropolis of the middlewest. It was not surprising, therefore, that Rufus Wilsey undertook the construction of a \$60,000 hotel building the following year. In the spring of 1857, Rufus Wilsey, Hawkins Taylor and man by the name of O'Harra organized a company to build a grand hotel, one that would be in keeping every way with the great future that seemed to be opening out before Keokuk. The corner of Main and Fifth Streets was selected for the proposed hotel, and \$40,000 was paid for 150 feet front. Mr. H. H. Belding publisher of the "Northwestern Review" in his July number of 1857 states:

The Estes House: This large and magnificent hotel in Keokuk is now being fast completed, under the management of its proprietors, Messrs. Wilsey & Harrow (O'Harra). The building is 150 by 140 feet, five stories high on Main street and six stories on the alley, will contain 3500 perch (87,500 cubic feet) of stone, and two million of brick. The first story in front is built of stone, cut in a most beautiful style. The estimated cost of this building, including the furnishings, Mr. Wilsey informs us, is \$200,000.

The erection of the Estes House was carried up to the fourth floor when the panic of 1857 struck; these were dark days for Keokuk, and as one citizen wrote:

It was a fearful financial revulsion, that for a time destroyed credit, checked trade, overthrew its manufacturers—disheartened its business men—greatly reduced its population, and threw a pall of torpor and gloom over denizen and town. Thousands who had rushed in and aided to raise the surging waves of speculation, were as suddenly washed away by the ebbing flow. No other western city experienced so disastrously, in all its interests, this evil 'tide in the affairs of men'.

With the panic and shrinkage of values, the projectors of that mammoth structure were forced to succumb to the inevitable. In their extremity, they applied to Col. J. K. Hornish for aid to complete the undertaking. Mr. Hornish responded and commenced to advance money to finish this metropolitan enterprise. He was later forced to foreclose and assume the management of its completion—the entire cost of which was about \$187,000. It was at this time that it received its name, "Estes House", in honor of a distinguished Keokuk citizen, J. C. Estes.

Numerous articles give this honor to J. C. Estes; however James B. Diver, a one time prominent citizen of Keokuk and a resident since 1854, was among the crowd that gathered at Fifth and Main streets to witness the laying of the Estes House corner stone in 1857. He states that the building was named for J. L. Estes who was a real-estate dealer with offices over the First National Bank and had his residence on Franklin street between Sixth and Seventh. He was at one time Sheriff of Lee County, and is reported to have officiated at the hanging of the Hodges, William and Stephen, convicted of murder and hanged by the sheriff of Des Moines County July 15, 1845. Mr. Diver also states that J. L. gave \$10,000 toward the new building and was honored by having it

named after him. The J. C. Estes was a tinner with a shop on Main street between Eleventh and Twelfth streets, while his residence was located in the alley between Twelfth and Thirteenth and between Bank and Timea streets.

The construction of the building, which commenced May 5, 1857, was not without its casualties; the "Keokuk Post" of September 11 that year, mentions:

Yesterday about half-past one o'clock the scaffolding on the top of the third story, and at the west end of the new hotel, the Estes House, on which six or seven laborers were engaged, suddenly gave way, and the unfortunate men fell, along with a heavy mass of bricks and mortar and broken timbers to the lower story, a distance of some sixty feet. The damage to the building is immaterial, but the injury to the workmen is truly frightful.

One man, a German named John Kiber, was taken from the cellar dead. Another, also a German, whose name is Theodore Schuttz, is supposed to be fatally hurt, although he is not dead at the time of writing this. Four others, Irishmen, are all seriously injured, but none of them fatally, it is believed.

The accident was caused by an over-weight of bricks and mortar on the scaffolding, which rested on the joists or "stringers", the laborers having very imprudently decided to get up a large supply of material to keep ahead of the bricklayers. The material was raised in the usual manner by rope and pulley operated by a horse. When the crash took place the horse was in the first story of the building, but very prudently ran out, and thus escaped.

The names of the injured persons are as follows. They were all laboring men:

JOHN KIBER, German, corner Thirteenth and Blondeau streets. Dead. Leaves a wife and three children.

THEODORE SCHUTTZ, near Fifth and Palean, reported to be fatally hurt. Not yet dead. Has a wife and several children.

PATRICK SHERIDAN, head and arm hurt — is speechless.

JOHN KINNEY, corner Fifth and Exchange, badly hurt.

TIM CATON, near corner First and Main, side and head hurt.

PATRICK O'BRIEN, Fifth street, head cut, skull probably fractured.

It is thought that the four latter will recover.

DIED — Since writing the above, Theodore Schuttz has died.

Inquests will be held this morning by Coroner O'Connor, at 9 o'clock at Kiber's, corner Thirteenth and Bondeau, and at 10:30 o'clock at Schuttz's, corner Fifth and Palean.

The corner-stone of the Estes House was laid June 29, 1857, and contained the following articles: A bottle of Catawba wine, (the opening in corner-stone was cut in the

shape of this bottle), copies of three city papers, a one dollar bill of the city scrip, a penny of 1857, a three cent piece of 1854, a twenty-five cent piece of 1857, a copy of Mayor Hawkins Taylor's inauguration speech and a list of premiums of the Lee County fair.



Estes House

One of the most salient features in the construction of the Estes House was its sanitary arrangement, which, in 1857, was considered a great achievement and yet with today's modern conveniences are almost unbelievable. The building was built in the shape of a hollow square 150 feet by 140 feet. It was arranged with a room facing the street then a hallway and another room facing an inner court, thereby giving each room a window. There was also a stove for each room and a row of hooks for hanging clothes; there were no clothes closets. Also, as regular equipment there were the ewer and wash-bowl and the chamber pot. In the center of the inner court was a five story cone-shaped out-house built of brick,

the grand-daddy of them all; there was never a comparison by "Chick Sales" or the W.P.A. during their "Sanitary Out-house" building crusade in the early '30s. To utilize this convenience, each floor had a hallway leading to the center of the court from three sides. Around the inside court was constructed a walk-way or balcony which gave access to this brick structure; inside it was built up with walls and ceiling and necessary appurtances. From the roof all spouting was directed into this structure, as was all of the tin drainage tubs which were on each floor and into which all bath and wash water was diverted. This in turn helped to dispose of all matter consigned into the tower and flush it through a three foot sewer, which was built in the creek bed extending from out on Morgan street, diagonally through the town between Sixth and Fifth streets and onto the river. When we consider that there was no plumbing and all water was carried up the five flights of this building, it is probably fortunate that it was not used extensively as a hotel during this era as it no doubt would have had its disadvantages during an exceptionally dry spell.

The alley side of this structure, which was the low side, was almost six stories tall, and there was a doorway placed there for use as well as clean out purposes should the occasion arise. This lower entrance was the cause of great consternation on a particular May 3rd, 1900, and it bears repeating, head lines and all, just as published in the Thursday morning *Gate City* of that date:

A NARROW ESCAPE—PROMINENT COURT OFFICERS NEAR HORRIBLE DEATH—TRAGEDY TURNED TO A FARCE—AFTER AN HOUR AND A HALF SPENT IN A VAULT THEY ARE RESCUED MORE DIRTY THAN ALIVE.

This is a story of a tragedy that is too funny and too tragic to be true, but it is literally true, nevertheless. It happened after the Keokuk people came home from the West Point convention, but it has taken some time to work up all the details with accuracy.

A Keokuk judge heard a mysterious shot that startled the vicinity of Sixth and Main street that night—by the way, the shot was an accident in the armory of Company A. After hearing the shot and the arguments of the by-standers, and the court being fully advised in the premises, he went into a place of entertainment and called out the clerk of his court,

who is a fine fellow. He got the tragic end of the adventure as will appear.

The court advised the clerk of its police powers and said that they would search the alley between Fifth and Sixth streets and between Main and Johnson, and arrest the shooters. The search began in the dark alley and not even a clue was found at first. Then the Judge and clerk were trapped as nicely as in a melodrama constructed for the gallery.

They came to an out-house, the door of which was unlocked because it was in constant use by the neighbors. But the neighbors knew the combination of the hole in the floor, and dodged it. The Judge did not have the judicial knowledge of this hole, or this story would not be told. He opened the door and stepped into the dark — he had previously said that he had courage as well as police-powers.

'Whoo-in Ugh! Ugh! Help me out quick!!! Help me out for the sake of - - -'

The Judge had stepped into a hole twelve feet deep with walled sides and a bottom that the least said about, the better. The clerk was brave and loyal and into the out-house he rushed to rescue the bench at the bottom.

He went clear to the bottom too, and landed on top of the Judge, which was not keeping his place. It was soon evident that a mandamus could not get them out. It was 9:45 o'clock [sic] and nobody was within earshot. Nobody would be likely to go through that alley before the next week. It was really a serious situation, although everybody laughs at it who thinks of the two there in the several feet of nastiness.

The two discussed who should get onto the shoulders of the other. The clerk being the lighter and the Judge the taller, the clerk made an able argument in equity in favor of climbing out first himself but the Court over-ruled him. The fact was that it was impossible to get out that way anyhow.

I have my dagger, we'll both die together before morning and I'll make quicker work of it, said the Judge.

There is no accelerator of climbing like a determined Judge with a dagger when you are with him at the bottom of a twelve foot vault. The clerk became as agile as a monkey and as cunning as a successful politician. He climbed at the wall until his finger nails were worn off and his fingers were sore. There was nothing funny in this. He actually wore his hands to the quick making ineffectual scratches at the perpendicular walls.

The Judge began to talk of his dagger again and the clerk became frantic. He called up his reserve strength and agility and finally he found a drain tile projecting into the vault. He managed to grasp it and finally got out. It was then 11:15 o'clock [sic] and they had been there an hour and a half, really in the face of death and at the bottom of a horrid hole.

Have you got a rope and a lantern? Only a face appeared around the door of police headquarters at 11:20 o'clock [sic] — the body of the man with the question was carefully con-

cealed by the door jamb. His clothes were not presentable just then. The police started for a rope and a lantern as soon as they recognized the clerk, and others took him in and found out what he wanted with the salvage corps.

The rescuing party were sworn to secrecy by both the Judge and the clerk, but they got the oath mixed up with something about the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. It is but just to say that none of them have mentioned the matter. But such a situation cannot be kept a secret in Keokuk and it leaked out as easily as the slime ran down from the judicial garments like anointing oil. This is a good place for the curtain to fall. An hour and a half in such a place in the middle of the night down an alley is a serious matter. But since it turned out with everybody all right, it may be laughed at now. Truth is always found at the bottom of a well, and the *Gate City* gives the exact truth of the couple at the bottom of that excavation in the alley.

In 1861, the citizens of Keokuk met at Verandah Hall and pledged themselves, with a disregard for all party differences save that between patriots and traitors, to support the government and flag through the war crisis; their action served to presage the transformation of the Estes House into a hospital. Two days after the meeting, on April 17, 1861, Keokuk was appointed as the official rendezvous for Iowa regiments and the city at once began to make preparations for the care of the sick and wounded.

The old Central High school building was the first to be turned into a hospital and records on file in the War Department disclose that Lieutenant C. J. Ball of the 13th infantry, in conjunction with Mayor Creel of Keokuk, took possession of the Estes House on April 17, 1862, and he made preparations to receive 300 wounded solidiers from Pittsburgh, Tenn. The Estes House at that time was not completed and of the 200 rooms in the building, 179 were fitted out for hospital purposes. Lt. Bell was obliged to spend over \$1,000 in necessary repairs to the bulding and for the use and rent of the same, offered the agent, H. Scott Howell, the sum of \$160 per month, but subsequently upon consultation with the medical inspector, C. C. Keeny, increased the amount to \$200 per month. This amount was refused by J. Edgar Thompson, president of the Pennsylvania railroad, who held a first trust on the building amounting to \$50,000 and a second trust of \$25,000 and who demanded, as rental, the sum of \$8,000 per annum. On January, 30, 1864, after considerable correspondence on

the subject the government agreed to pay \$300 per month from the date of the occupancy of the building. The rental was reduced to \$166.66 a month on the first of June, 1865, and on October 1, 1865, was discontinued.

The building was opened as a hospital in April of 1862. On April 16, Mayor R. P. Creel received the following telegram from Governor Kirkwood, who was then at Cairo, Illinois:

A boatload of wounded are going to Keokuk. Prepare the Medical College for their reception. Bedding and bed cots, shirts, drawers, etc. will be needed. Telegraph Kynett at Davenport for supplies. Cooking utensils will be needed for some 200.

The Medical College was then being used as a hospital and was already filled with patients. Mayor Creel enlisted the help of both men and women to clean up the Estes House; many of the rooms had never been used since the building was erected and had not been cleaned since they were plastered. Orders were given for the making of cots and bedding. On April 10th the ladies of Keokuk rallied in large force and it was a busy day for Keokuk; by nightfall 112 beds were prepped and all furnished with suitable bedding. Twelve hundred yards of bed ticking and six hundred yards of muslin were used. Several stoves were sent in and put in place, and twelve boxes of supplies arrived from Davenport.

The first boat load of wounded arrived April 19th, 1862, on the steamer *EXPRESS*. There were almost 200 wounded and sick soldiers and four had died on the boat. Fire bells tolled at four o'clock in the morning announcing the arrival of the boat, and the men and women of Keokuk went on duty then doing all in their power for the poor unfortunates. On April 23rd the steamer *A. D. JANUARY* brought 200 more patients and the Estes House hospital was almost filled. There were thirty-seven deaths during the first ten days the building was used as a hospital and on April 30th there were 293 patients in the building. The first monthly report of the United States General Hospital at Keokuk was made May 1, 1862, and was as follows: Patients received, 599; Returned to duty, 11; Furloughed, 210; died, 42; buried here, but died on boat, 7; Now sick in hospital, 181; Convalescent in hospital, 96; Convalescent, detailed for duty at hospital, 39. Of the dead, twelve had typhoid fever, eight died from gunshot wounds

and six died from broken bones; five amputations were made. By January 1863; the Estes House had 652 beds with 525 patients, and at this time there were altogether five buildings being used as hospitals: The Estes House with 525 patients, the Leighton House with 320; Simpson House with 200, the Medical College with 265 and the Fourth Street with 130. By Christmas of 1863, there had been 7,396 sick and wounded soldiers brought back to Keokuk and placed in the hospitals, of these 617 had died.

A Keokuk woman in writing of the hospitals, said:

Under the leadership of Mrs. Col. Thompson, Mrs. S. A. Duke, Mrs. Samuel B. Ayres, Mrs. Smith Hamill, Mrs. Harry Fulton, Mrs. J. B. Howell, Mrs. Lowe, wife of Governor Lowe, Mrs. J. C. Hughes and others, the work of nursing the sick and wounded was systematically carried on until the government could assume control. The hospitals were furnished with what the Keokuk women donated, and after giving more than they could spare, it was for them to comfort the dying, to dress the lacerated bodies, to wipe the sweat of agony from their brows, to feed them and give them words of cheer. And they did it.



Mrs. Annie Wittenmyer

It was in these Keokuk hospitals that Mrs. Annie Wittenmyer (1827-1900) began as a nurse, and went on to do greater things. She organized diet kitchens in the military hospitals so that the sick men were given suitable foods instead of the diet of beans and bacon which the army furnished. She went to the front as a field nurse with the army of General Grant, who said, "No soldier on the firing line gave more heroic service than she rendered."

Gov. Kirkwood used Mrs. Wittenmyer's report as the basis of a direct appeal to the people of Iowa to contribute from their comparatively abundant supplies of fresh produce to afford greater variety to the diet to the soldiers. As a result of this appeal to the public, accounts of the period tell of the community furnishing crackers, eggs, butter, dried fruits, jellies, cordials, sugar, dried beef, green tea, mustard, tapioca, nutmeg, cornstarch and solidified milk. Farmers living near Keokuk donated 108 wagon loads of wood during the winter of 1862-63; wood was the only fuel used and a report shows that in November of that year 596 cords were consumed, and in December, 576 cords were used in heating the Estes House.

Mrs. Wittenmyer and her associates also took the initiative in planning means to care for the soldiers' orphans. She had proposed the plan at a woman's convention at Muscatine, Iowa, in October 1863, and it received a favorable indorsement by Governor Kirkwood.

Out of these preliminary efforts was incorporated the Iowa Soldier's Home. This, out of the tragedy of the war, on the initiative of private individuals and supported by private contributions, some of them from soldiers, in the field, was added another unit to the institutional life of the State. Governor Stone, in his message of June 1868, recommended particular attention to this home for the care and maintenance of the children of deceased soldiers. This institution, first established as a private corporation and supported by voluntary donations from soldiers in the army and other sources, was finally adopted by the State and then taken under its exclusive authority. The principal department was established near the city of Davenport, with branches at Cedar Falls and Glenwood. The 11th General Assembly, in assuming control of the institution, levied a small tax for its support.

After the Civil War, Mrs. Wittenmyer wrote *Under the Guns, a Woman's Reminiscences of the Civil War*. The book contained a number of interesting incidents and the introduction was written by Mrs. Ulysses S. Grant.

Another Keokuk lady to be remembered was Mrs. Sally Hanford, who with her three daughters, Emma, Sarah and Mary, joined the nursing staff in the latter part of 1861, and

were under Dr. Taylor in the Estes House Hospital. In 1863, the four joined the Christian Commission and were with Mrs. Annie Wittenmyer. They were transferred to various hospitals, once under Dr. Wythe at Chattanooga and again with Dr. McMillan in Knoxville, Tennessee. Her two brothers, who enlisted in the early part of the war, died of injuries received in battle.

On orders from the Surgeon-General, the evacuation of the Estes House hospital was started in June, 1865, with the transfer of patients to Davenport, and the building was returned to its peace-time status.

The 1866 Directory lists the following tenants in the Estes House:

Gen. W. W. Belknap, offices upstairs
S. G. Bridge, jeweler, Numbers 1 and 2
John McEvvitt, merchant tailor, Number 3
Spiesberger Bros. & Co., Number 4
M. Gregg, agt. Dry Goods, Numbers 5 and 6
Marks & Erlich, Clothing store, in Entrance
Drs. H. T. Cleaver and M. K. Taylor, Prof. of Med. S.U.I.
had offices
G. H. Buss, a cement roofer, residence
W. D. Cone, a medical student, lodgings
Miss B. C. Hoopes, dressmaker, resided and operated there
Baylies Mercantile Collere, did a little misleading advertising by showing the Estes House as a College building, when in fact they occupied only a few second floor rooms.
Mr. W. H. Miller was principal, and it was a well attended and quite an important college. The college later moved to the Gibbon Opera House and then, was moved to Dubuque. Many of the successful men of Keokuk and vicinity received their first training in business at this old college.

The street numbering at this time started at Water street and ran twenty-five numbers to the block consecutively; thus Fifth and Main street was 125 to 150. The Estes House numbers should have been 126 to 136, being on the south side, however, the building was given individual numbers and the Linqvist store was listed as 138 Main. The outlying streets had no individual numbers; a house was listed as being "between 10th and 11th" etc. This system was not changed until 1878 when the Philadelphia system was put into use where the block number prefixes the house number, such as we have today.

The Estes House, after being discontinued as a hospital, was for some years the place for holding Federal Court, and what is believed to be the only litigation on record in which the Holy Bible served as the defendant was tried there in 1866. One of the most famous treason cases ever heard in Keokuk, the trial grew out of the action of the United States in ordering the seizure of all property belonging to a Keokuk attorney, William S. Winder, who had his offices on Second street between Main and Johnson. Winder left the city at the outbreak of the war in 1861 and was commissioned a captain in the Confederate Army. He was also credited with the selection of the site for the notorious Andersonville prison and to have laid it out for his father, John H. Winder.

Winder's property here included 100 or more books, the most important of which was listed as "One Holy Bible", thus explaining the title of the liable action filed on March 3, 1866, by Caleb Baldwin, attorney for the United States.

The Hon. James M. Love presided at the session of court with R. H. Gilmore as deputy U. S. Attorney, L. C. Burns as the clerk, Erie J. Leach, deputy clerk, Peter Melendy the marshal and Harry Fulton, deputy marshal.

It was in consequence of Winder's becoming an officer of the rebel army that the United States caused the seizure of all the money, estate, property, credits and effects of the Keokuk attorney. Among the books confiscated in addition to the Bible were Blackstone's Commentaries, Chitty on Pleading, Stark on Evidence, a lay dictionary, Greenleaf's Evidence, and many others of lesser importance.

In the liable petition the prosecuting attorney said that Winder's offence "hath not in any wise been pardoned or condoned by the proclamation of the president of the United States, or otherwise, for he shows that the said Winder from and after July 17, 1862, until May 29, 1865, was engaged in treating, otherwise than lawfully, as prisoners of war, persons found in the United States services — as officers, soldiers, seamen and in other capacities, in that during the time aforesaid, the said Winder at Andersonville in the State of Virginia, did inhumanly treat, starve, oppress, unlawfully treat, and otherwise those as prisoners of war, persons found in the services of the United States."

The liable charged further that "after the 17th day of July, 1862, one William S. Winder acted as an officer of the army of the rebels then and thereafter in arms against the government of the United States, to-wit as captain in the army of said rebels."

Publication for the sale of the confiscated property was published in the *Daily Gate City*, from March 4 until March 20th. Judgement was secured on March 24, 1866 and having been properly advertised, the books were offered for sale on April 4. For want of bidders, the sale was adjourned, however, they were eventually sold for \$126.65, at a cost of \$42.79.

Whether in commemoration of this famous case, or for the edification of the general public, there was later painted, on an entire wall, a picture of the Andersonville prison, with every point numbered and each number identified with a key; this was used as the G.A.R. hall and as a community meeting place vied with the old Gibbons Opera House, now the K. C. Hall and Montgomery-Ward building.

In 1893, the occupants of the stores were as follows: McGrath Bros., Harry Versteeg's Shoe Store, M. J. Burke's ice cream parlor, Prof. W. H. Jones' barber shop, W. G. Parrott's hat store, Sam C. Wescott's book store, and C. Hornaday's jewelry store. On the Fifth Street side were Mr. B. F. Hill's millinery shop, a Chinese laundry, Weiler's barber shop and John T. Crotty's marble shop. Torrence Post of the G.A.R. occupied the hall during that year.

The first actual use of the Estes House as a hotel seems to have been during 1894-96. McCoy's City Directory of that date carries a full page advertisement of the Illiamo Hotel, located at 500-506 Main. "A strictly first class hotel with elevator and all modern conveniences". They also state that all the rooms are newly and elegantly furnished. With spacious sample rooms free to drummers, they can also supply Russia vapor, hot and cold water baths, and electric cars which run to and from the Union Depot, pass the hotel.

This was only half of the building; the upper side 508-512, was "Ringlands Sanitorium," E. B. Ringland, M. D. Physician and proprietor, with residence at the same place. This hospital, or sanitorium, as he called it, was expressly for the treatment of chronic and surgical cases, the eye and ear

being a specialty. He also states in his advertising that cancer and hemorrhoids were positively cured.

Dr. Ringland, and E. B. Knott, who conducted the hotel, had a plan to convey Artesian water to the building from the well at the pickle factory on First and Johnson streets. At the City Council meeting of April 2, 1894, the following petition was received:

We, the undersigned, respectfully petition you for permission to run a two inch water pipe along the alley between Main and Johnson streets and to bore beneath Second, Third, Fourth and Fifth streets for the purpose of conducting mineral water from the Keokuk Pickel Works to the Estes House building, corner of Fifth and Main streets, Keokuk, Iowa. Signed, E. B. Ringland, W. A. Knott.

The request was referred to the city engineer, W. H. Jones, and the street committee, W. H. Blood, S. I. Rutledge, W. G. Davis and Wm. Reimbold, who granted the petition, but the main was not laid and the water never ran into the rooms of the hotel. The hotel and sanitorium were both of short duration, however, in 1896 the building was used as a hotel under the name of "Hotel Hawkeye" with E. S. Boswell as proprietor. Boswell was a practical hotel keeper and was quite successful. The theatrical troupes would stop at the Hawkeye and he did a fair business there. Gus Smith became the proprietor in 1900 and changed the name to Hotel Estes. Mr. Smith had been in business on Second Street for many years running the Windsor Hotel, however, he operated the Estes Hotel for but a short time and it was never used as a hotel after he discontinued it.

March 19th, 1928, was the beginning of the end of the old Estes House; it was on this date that S. S. Ruttenberg filed a deed to the property showing that it had been transferred to him by the trustees of the J. Edgar Thompson estate.

The deed was a special warranty deed dated March 14. By it Elisha Lee, W. Heyward Myers Jr., and Edward F. Gailey as "surviving trustees convey under the last will and testament of J. Edgar Thompson, deceased, the property covering lots one, two and three, to S. S. Rutenberg". No formal consideration was given in the deed filed; ten dollars and other considerations being given, however, it was understood to have been in the neighborhood of \$75,000.

On March 19th notice was given to Warneke's Drug Store at 500 Main St., Glasgow Tailors at 502, Jester & Faber, jewelers, Bonny Optical Shop at 504, Russell's Bakery at 506, Brody's Boot Shop at 510, Brody Bros. clothing store at 512, J. M. Huiskamp & Sons Est. shoe at 514, the J. C. Penney Co., at 516, G. W. Brannard, barber, at number 10, Professor W. H. Jones & Sons, also barbers, at No. 12, and Henry F. Krueger, the tailor at No. 14, that within ten to twenty days the new owner would have definite information as to what was to be done. By June 9th, it was definitely established that the building was to be torn down and replaced by a two story structure, plans which at that time were near completion in the offices of Martin Geise, Architect. On June 12, the job of razing the building was started. On July 27, the paper noted that "the razing of the Estes House has been carried on to such a point that the building has been torn down clear to the basement at the north end of the structure. Workmen were getting down the last vestige of the walls there today and began this afternoon to tear up the flooring." And at a rapid pace the historic old building was reduced to rubble.

Much excitement was created with the finding of an old pocketbook in one of the walls torn down; there was about \$50.00 in old U. S. scrip, but its condition was so bad that it was doubtful if it could be redeemed. The money was found by two laborers by the names of Graves and Buffington. Three days later, three more bills were reported to have been found; they were said to have been bills of \$1,000 denomination, but they were either State currency or City scrip and had only a collectors value. Another item of interest found was a ticket printed in German and admitting the bearer to the picnic and excursion of St. Paul's Congregation. The date was June 16, 1871, and the excursion was to Warsaw, Ill.

The removal of the corner stone was an event looked forward to by a committee composed of representatives of several patriotic societies of the City and of the Chamber of Commerce. These were: The G.A.R., C.T. Miller; the Sons of Veterans, Ed. S. Lofton; Spanish War Veterans, James S. Burrows; American Legion, Dr. F. M. Fuller; Chamber of Commerce, J. W. Winger, Dale E. Carrell, C. S. Abell, and W. E. Holmes; State Committee, Judge John M. Rankin.

While the contents of the corner-stone were known, it was a great shock to the entire community when on the morning of August 21, it was discovered that the contents of the corner-stone had been looted. The paper reported the theft as follows:

Unknown persons last night broke into the cornerstone of the old Estes House, stealing the entire contents and evidently drinking up the bottle of Catawba wine which was one of the articles in the old corner-stone. The empty bottle, a few loose bricks and an old crate cover or platform turned up against the corner-stone to hide the opening, told the tale of the theft to the police. The crime was discovered this morning by Officer Conn who was talking with "Cap" Hoogawing, who has been foreman on the job of tearing down the old structure, and they noticed the bricks were disturbed. Following police investigation two men were taken into custody and informations were filed in the court of Justice E. E. Hawkes charging Ed Holland and G. Buffington with larceny of valuable documents and wine taken from the corner-stone.

Both men denied participation and stated they were wrongfully accused. The two men were later let out on bonds of \$500 each to await action of the grand jury, however, there was no proof to be found and nothing ever came of the matter and where the contents of the corner-stone disappeared to was never solved.

The opening in the stone was in the shape of a quart bottle such as the old wine must have been in, and was cut sufficiently deep to contain the other articles supposedly interred with it.

The corner-stone was eventually removed under supervision of the committee and later established under a bronze and glass case in the National Cemetery, a fitting place for the historic old stone.

A stone with a bronze marker in the National Cemetery, and another bronze tablet at Fifth and Main street are all that remains today of one of the city's proudest achievements of the 1857 boom era. A two day celebration was arranged with bands, old veterans, dignitaries of the city and state, and other patriotic organizations. On October 1st, 1929, Mrs. Marion J. Hall of Davenport, president of the Daughters of Union Veterans, Department of Iowa; and donors of a handsome bronze tablet, presented same to Oley Nelson, of Slater, Iowa, past Department Commander of the Iowa G.A.R. who accepted the tablet marking the site of the Estes House

Hospital in the name of the G.A.R. and in turn presented it to the city of Keokuk. The tablet was unveiled by three little girls, Mary Ann Cronin, great-granddaughter of Sarah Jane Thompson, Civil War nurse; Betty Koch and Vera Callsen.

In presenting the tablet, Mrs. Hall spoke of the pride which the Daughters of Veterans have in their heritage, and of their task to preserve the memories of the men who fought to save the nation.

On October 2nd, the dedication of the corner-stone in the National Cemetery, where it had been placed and whose dead served as the nucleus for the establishment of the cemetery, appropriately climaxed a day of historic dedications. Beginning in Victory Park where a table, presented by the Auxiliary to the Sons of Veterans marking the site of the embarkation of nearly every Iowa regiment, was unveiled, and an ornamental flag staff, the gift of the Keokuk Circle No. 32, Ladies of the G.A.R., was presented and flag raising ceremonies held. In the afternoon a parade made its way out Main Street to the High School at 14th Street, where a tablet bearing the immortal words of Lincoln's Gettysburg address was presented by the Iowa Department of the Woman's Relief Corp. From the School the parade went to Twentieth and Main Streets where the George V. Jenkin's Camp, U. S. W. V., unveiled the Maine memorial table; this is now in Rand Park. From this ceremony the procession went to the National Cemetery for the dedication of the Estes House corner-stone, which was unveiled by Marcia Helen Wescott, great granddaughter of J. C. Estes. The inscription on the tablet reads:

Corner-stone of the old Estes House, Fifth and Main, Keokuk, Iowa. Site of Army Hospital April 1862-October 1, 1865. Erected to the memory of the soldiers who died in the old General Hospital and are buried in the National Cemetery.

And thus, after seventy-one years, progress writes finis to one of Keokuk's greatest landmarks. To those who were familiar with the grand old building, nostalgic memories remain: the gang that used to congregate at Warneke's Drug store, the delicious aromas emanating from Russell's Bakery, and blind Harry Samuels, playing the little organ on the corner of Fifth and Main on Saturday nights.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I wish to express my thanks to Miss Aina Smith and Mrs. Warren F. Wales for their original research on the "Estes House" which was presented by Mrs. Jane Kerr at the May 28th, 1959, meeting of the Lee County Historical Society, at Keokuk, Iowa. This presentation created the desire to further the research and as a result, a number of interesting items were brought to light.

I wish expressly to thank Sam Russell, who was a City Commissioner at the time the Este House was razed, and conducted a bakery in the old building up to that time. During his occupancy he had the opportunity to investigate the entire building from cellar to roof, and it is from him that the detailed description of the sanitary arrangements were acquired; his remarkable memory also brought to light the fact that there were baking ovens built in the Fifth Street side of the building which were no doubt used during the Civil War to supply the daily bread needs of the sick and wounded.

R. J. Bickel

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