

In November 1914 a fire occurred in this building, the source being a kerosene heater located on the second floor of the west half of the building (this is the hidden part). The newspaper states that this part of the building was at that time used by the help from the Saratoga Hotel. The Saratoga Hotel happened to be (mainly) operating in the building to the west of the Opera Hall Block. It would not be so far fetched to believe that the hotel expanded into the west half of Opera Hall Block. That would explain the little rooms deliberately finished and labeled with numbers— extra hotel rooms. One could not expect a modern day level of comfort in a hotel stay as one might get prior to 1914. There was likely plenty of business from patrons merely seeking an inexpensive place to lay their heads at night.

But back to that fire. It was reported that the kerosene heater burned a hole in the floor, but did not gain hold in the ceiling. The very back room that we entered when the “hidden room” was found was covered in soot and debris and did have a hole burned in the floor. This must have been the site of the origin of the fire in 1914. It appears that the smoke damaged articles were put in this room, the door shut and not opened for decades.

Interestingly there is no interior access to the west half of the second floor. It seems that access would have been made through the building directly west, where the Saratoga Hotel was operating. The east facing windows in the Saratoga Hotel building had at one point been made into entrance points. They were long ago bricked up, hiding this mystery space.

The Museum was able to salvage a cider cooler which must have been used in either the saloon or the pool hall which existed in the street level shop fronts at the time of the fire. The patented cider cooler consists of an enameled wooden tub with ceramic vessels and a separate area for ice. Imagine glass or ceramic bottles of cider dispensed upside down into the ceramic vessels to the taps for dispensing the drink. It is in wonderful condition and maybe a little classier than we were expecting the saloon or pool hall to be. You can see it and a few other items found in the building on display at the Museum this summer.

[You might be more familiar with the Opera Hall Block knowing that this is the building that housed Silverberg’s, Lee’s, Thompson’s and Whipple’s Clothing stores. An extremely non-descript brick façade was put up in 1969, covering up half of the second floor windows and probably effectively “hiding” the west half of the second floor from our community memory at that time.]

Memberships

**New Member*

Jan– Mar

Century

Chuck & Dorie Sendelbach– Pipestone
 Myron & Nancy Koets– Pipestone
 Mary Ann VanHorsen– Scottsdale, AZ
 Loren Weatherly– Sacramento, CA
 Greg & Connie Carrow– Pipestone
 Beverly Sogn– Sioux Falls, SD

Supporting

Steve & Minnie Huisken– Edgerton
 Jay Hanson– Minneapolis, MN
 Barbara Strommer– Lakeville, MN
 *Crystal Wilke– Pipestone
 Faith Sullivan– Minneapolis, MN
 Vicki & Earl Flowers– St. Paul, MN
 Brad & Cathie Burris– Pipestone
 Dave & AnnaBelle Gilmore– Pipestone

Household

Pat & Carla Barkley– Wilmington, DE
 Bill & Doreen Thies– Pipestone
 David Huisken– Lansdowne, PA
 Bill & Bunny Johnson– Pipestone
 Eileen Runia– Pipestone
 Mary & Rod DeReu– Stillwater, MN
 Paul & Lou Ann Andrews– Pipestone
 Tom & Avis Tourville– Spirit Lake, IA
 Glen Livermont– Pipestone
 Jo Gewecke– Pipestone

Friend

Paul Kelley– Media, PA
 Marjorie Swenson– Oak Ridge, TN
 Gladycy Nosbusch– Pipestone
 Allen Co. Public Library– Ft. Wayne, IN
 *Lori Everett– Pipestone
 Patt Johnson– Pipestone
 Colleen Hofelman– Pipestone
 Nyla Johnson– Pipestone
 Mary Ott– Omaha, NE
 Tim & Stacey Haubrich– Pipestone
 Jakob Etrheim– Willmar, MN

Business

Peak Pros, Inc.– Pipestone

A Forgotten Immigrant Tale

While conducting research for a patron at the Museum, staff came across this small news tidbit as reported in the **Pipestone County Star, May 9, 1892:**

A German named John Bisanz, accompanied by his wife and five children, arrived from the north over the Great Northern yesterday morning. The party was en route from Galizien, in the German-Russian Territories to Avoca where they have relatives. None of the party could speak a word of English and for eight weeks they have been sent from place to place, the railroad employees not seeming to care where the party went. They had \$60 in money when they landed in this country but that was soon exhausted and still they were miles from their destination. When the family arrived here they were taken to the Sherman House where Landlord Loomis gave them breakfast. Marshal Carnegie was sent for and he gave them comfortable quarters in the village building until this morning when they were sent to Avoca. A. Wubbins acted as interpreter for the family. Mr. Loomis fed the family free all the time they were here and he and the Marshal raised a purse to pay their fare to Avoca.

Wow, what an immigrant story. The trials of the immigration trip are usually not illustrated in such a straight forward, contemporary account. And surely the weary family never knew they made the local newspaper in Pipestone, Minnesota as they struggled through the last leg of their long journey. Neither would any descendant think to check the Pipestone newspaper for part of their family's story. But here it is anyway and it sure led us to some questions.

First of all, we were not familiar with "Galizien" in the German Russian Territories, so we had to look that up. We "googled" it and found that in 1892 Galizien was the largest and northernmost province of the Austrian Empire. Today, the area straddles the border of Poland and the Ukraine. These people had traveled a very long distance to land so close to their destination in Minnesota and become stranded. Most of their travel story is likely lost, so it is especially interesting to have this gem show up in the newspaper.

Looking for any documentation online of this family entering the United States, we came across a ship passenger list— in German— that told us quite a bit. This family of seven boarded the ship "German Empire" in Hamburg with a destination of "Amerika" via Liverpool. They set off on April 16, 1892. The ship manifest gives the names and ages of the family: Johann Bisanz, age 40, Caroline, age 35, and the five children; Johann, age 14; Rosalie, age 9; Rudolph, age 7, Jacob, age 5; and Catherine, an infant.

We can assume that their ultimate destination was Avoca, which is so close to Pipestone by today's standards— about 40 miles directly east in Murray County. We will have to contact the Murray County Historical Society to see if this family's story can be picked up from there, or if there are any descendants in the area today.

Other parts of the story intrigued us as well and we had to look into the early history of the Pipestone community. We found nothing at all on A. Wubbins, and have not been able to track down much on Alex Carnegie, other than he was the marshal of Pipestone County. In 1892 he was in his 30s and he had actually been born in Canada to Scottish immigrants. There were at that time a couple of unrelated Carnegie families in the area.

We also looked into the Sherman House hotel. It was built sometime before 1888, which would make it a very early 'hotel' for the city of Pipestone. It was located at 109 East Main Street, or Olive Street as it was called then. Today 1st Farmers & Merchants Bank is located on that corner. The hotel was called "Central House" in January 1888, when it was reportedly remodeled and re-named the "Sherman House."

Edward B. Loomis was the hotelkeeper at the Sherman House in 1892. He was in his late 30s, married with several children at home. He was originally from Pennsylvania where his father was a hotelkeeper. Edward had come west, first to Iowa, then to Dakota Territory, before settling in Pipestone. In October 1893 he left the Sherman House to take the manager position at the Calumet Hotel.